

Washington - Congresswoman Linda Sánchez joined Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and the new Congressional majority in commemorating Equal Pay Day, which recognizes the right of women to earn equal pay for doing equal work. Each year, Equal Pay Day represents the number of days into the year the average woman must work just to earn the same amount as the average man earned by December 31 of the prior year.

A recent study by the American Association of University Women shows that just one year after graduating from college, women earn 80 percent of what their male counterparts make, a gap that increases over time. The group's research accounted for factors that can affect wages, including the number of hours worked, professional field and parenthood. The report found that these factors do not account for the entire pay gap, and concluded that it is likely due to sexual discrimination.

"Pay inequality hurts all Americans, from the kitchen counter to the corporate board room," said Congresswoman Sánchez, a Member of the House Committee on Education and Labor. "In my mother's generation, employers justified paying women less by explaining that men had families to support while women worked simply for 'pin money.' Today both the law and the reality have changed. When women unfairly receive lower wages, they have a harder time paying for everyday needs like food and healthcare and families suffer.

"So long as we tolerate pay based on gender and not on performance, our overall economic strength will suffer," she continued.

Congresswoman Sánchez is a co-sponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act, a bill that would strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 by providing training to help women negotiate better pay from the outset and by providing more effective penalties for those who violate the equal pay law.

"While women have made tremendous progress in the workplace, we still have a lot of work left to achieve real fairness," said Congresswoman Sánchez. "The Paycheck Fairness Act is a step in the right direction."